

Valley Forge National Historical Park General Management Plan/EIS Concepts

Comparing the General Management Plan Concepts Presented below for purposes of public discussion are four concepts for the park’s future. Each addresses the park’s mission of interpretation, education, and resource preservation, as well as the key issues identified by the public this past autumn. At this early date, the concepts present broad alternative directions for management rather than specific actions. Once there is agreement at this conceptual level, specifics for activities and implementation will be detailed.

The first concept, “No Action,” is a baseline description of current conditions and what the likely outcome would be if no interventions were made. This description is required by law in order to provide a basis for comparison for the three “action” concepts. The three “action” concepts present various approaches to

interpretation of the park’s nationally significant history; management of the park’s cultural and natural resources; and visitor use and experiences in the park. In some cases, management prescriptions are the same in two or more concepts.

After public and agency review and discussion of the pros and cons of these concepts, it is likely that they will change. Some of them could be combined; additional concepts could be developed; or one or more could be dropped. Revised concepts will be presented for public review and comment later this spring.

A full range of alternative detailed *plans* will be prepared and fully assessed both for feasibility and impact in a draft GMP/EIS to be published this fall. (Please see the Valley Forge NHP map on page 8.)

Overall Concept	Concept 1 – No Action	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4
	The “No Action” management concept is the baseline for evaluation and provides a way to compare the other options to today’s conditions. In this concept, existing resource management policies and visitor use patterns continue unchanged. For example, this concept assumes that the availability of interpretive programming remains low; that the NCAR is not built in the park; that natural resources continue to be only minimally managed; and that heavy traffic continues to dominate the park.	<p>Concept 2 provides an exciting palette of new options for visitors to organize visits and experiences that best meet their own needs and interests. Experiences focus on exploration and discovery of the full history of Valley Forge.</p> <p>Historic landscape “layers” from all eras are preserved as is and actively interpreted.</p> <p>Most through-traffic on public roads is abated and calmed, in partnership with state and local government. Commuters continue to use public roads, and visitors continue to use automobiles on the tour route.</p> <p>Most recreational uses are gradually moved to the west end of the park, with appropriate new services added.</p>	<p>In Concept 3 selected areas of the park with the highest interpretive value (such as headquarters, brigade sites, and redoubts) are used as backdrops for storytelling about the revolution and encampment. Visitors follow a sequenced narrative around the park.</p> <p>Small selected areas of the park’s historic landscape are restored to encampment-era conditions.</p> <p>Some roads in the park are closed to through- and visitor traffic, in partnership with state and local government. Visitors use shuttles to access various sites around the park.</p> <p>Most recreational uses are gradually moved to the west end of the park, with appropriate new services added.</p>	<p>In Concept 4, visitors are immersed in an interpretive journey through numerous restored historic sites, at which dramatic presentations allow a sense of stepping back into the 1777-78 encampment. Visitors follow a sequenced narrative around the park.</p> <p>To enable this immersive experience, numerous individual areas, as well as larger landscapes such as the Grand Parade, are restored to encampment-era conditions.</p> <p>As well, many roads in the park are closed to through- and visitor traffic, in partnership with state and local government. Visitors use shuttles to access various sites around the park.</p> <p>Recreational uses are relocated away from core interpretive areas.</p>
	The museum exhibits and auto tour of the south side of the park continue to be the primary interpretive experiences. The history and resources of the north side of the park are not interpreted. Interpretive programs continue to be available primarily at Washington’s Headquarters and on a limited basis at the site of Muhlenberg’s Brigade.	Visitors are encouraged to explore the entire park and its themes through diverse programs as well as the opportunity to structure personal experiences that focus on discovery. Interpretation is available at existing facilities and areas throughout the site, and at a few new facilities within existing buildings. It covers a broad range of aspects of the site’s history and resources, not only encampment-era but also 19th and 20th century.	Visitors receive a structured experience of the park presented by interpretive staff at key areas of the site. The encampment’s layout and history are explained in detail. Visitors are encouraged to see these areas as a sequenced, progressive narrative with a clear beginning and conclusion. This is available in existing and new facilities and areas throughout the site. Visitors connect to the encampment via living history and vignette sites. There is little emphasis on post-encampment history.	Visitors are immersed in a structured experience of the park that follows a well-defined interpretive route portraying the encampment layout and history in detail. Visitors experience this as a journey, comprised of vignette exhibits complemented by concentrated restored zones at several areas across the site. The interpretive journey is as evocative as possible of the encampment period, to allow visitors to sense that they have stepped back into the 18th century. There is no presentation of post-encampment history.
	<p>The historic landscape is not restored, nor are new interpretive site exhibits developed. No new interpretive programs or approaches are available to aid in understanding the site. Because most encampment-era resources are archeological, and there is little above-ground delineation, it continues to be difficult for visitors to understand the physical layout of the encampment.</p> <p>Interpretive tools continue to include Welcome Center exhibits, limited on-site interpretive programs, signs, wayside exhibits, literature, and non-intrusive site exhibits (such as mowing to indicate property lines).</p>	<p>Visitors are equipped with the tools with which to imagine onto the landscape the historic scene of 1777-78. In this concept, personal imagination is essential because the landscape itself is not restored. Visitors are helped to see how the site was layered with different historic periods and successive commemorative features. Visitors engage in a process of ‘peeling back’ the park’s layers to understand the connections among the key elements of the site.</p> <p>Other interpretive tools include NCAR museum exhibits, technology applications ranging from personal audio devices to virtual viewing stations, an active interpretive archeology program, and traditional methods such as limited on-site interpretive programs and guided tours, wayside panels, signs, and literature.</p>	<p>The visitor is engaged with the landscape through storytelling and role-playing. Select “vignettes” (small exhibits at historic buildings or sites around the park) are located as places such as redoubts, brigade sites, and officers’ headquarters. Vignettes are the settings with which interpreters, waysides, and other media interact in order to convey vivid stories and impressions of past uses and appearances of the site. The managed circulation and set routing of the narrative allow visitors to see the connections among the key elements of the site.</p> <p>Other interpretive tools include NCAR museum exhibits, some rehabilitated historic views, technology applications, public interaction with the collections and research programs and traditional methods such as guided tours, wayside panels, signs, and literature.</p>	<p>“Vignettes” and larger restored areas of the landscape are used to provide an immersive experience in a variety of ways, including historic landscape restoration at key interpretive sites such as the Grand Parade, opening historic views and vistas, and selective screening of modern sightlines. Detailed patterns of encampment features such as brigade sites are interpreted and delineated, and historic roads used as primary circulation routes. These patterns allow visitors to see the connections among the key elements of the site.</p> <p>Other interpretive tools include NCAR museum exhibits, some technology applications, an interpretive archeology program, public interactions with the collections and research programs, and traditional methods such as guided tours, wayside panels, signs, and literature.</p>
Interpretive Experience	There continues to be little overall orientation or interpretation that explains the encampment and its relationship to the site.	In sum, explain and show the landscape as it is, but allow it to be “read” as it was. A sense of history is created as visitors learn by exploring, discovering and doing.	In sum, explain and show key features of the encampment landscape in microcosm. A sense of history is created as visitors hear stories told in evocative settings.	In sum, explain and show key features of the landscape in microcosm, linked by broad patterns. A sense of history is created through immersive experiences that rely extensively on interaction with interpreters, living history, and landscape features.
	An overview of some American Revolution themes is presented in the existing Welcome Center museum as context for the Valley Forge story. The emphasis on-site is the Valley Forge Encampment.	The full story of the American Revolution is presented in the new NCAR facility. The emphasis at interpretive sites around the park is the Valley Forge Encampment.		
	The current Welcome Center and its museum area remain to serve visitors. Only a small percentage of park visitors begin their visits at the center, missing the opportunity for orientation to services and stories.	The NCAR will be located at a site to be determined within the existing 66-acre “development zone” that centers around the existing Welcome Center. Alternatives for specific sites for the museum and alternatives for the use of the existing Welcome Center and administration buildings will be presented in the spring newsletter. The NCAR and renovated or newly constructed Welcome Center form the primary park gateway, and a full orientation to park and area stories and services is provided.		
		At the NCAR, visitors are introduced to the Valley Forge stories in overview and prepared to experience the park as a multi-layered historical and natural resource.	At the NCAR, visitors are introduced to the Valley Forge stories in overview and encouraged to follow the vignette experiences throughout the park.	At the NCAR, visitors are introduced to the Valley Forge stories in detail and prepared for the vignettes and concentrated core interpretive zones available in the park.
Cultural Resource Management	Natural resource interpretation continues to be minimally available and to be disconnected from interpretation of the Encampment.	Natural resource interpretation is regularly available and integrated with historical interpretation. It focuses on the relationship between the natural landscape and the encampment, and also on contemporary environmental issues represented by park resources.	Natural resource interpretation is regularly available, integrated with historical interpretation, and focuses on the relationship between the natural landscape and the encampment.	
	The cultural landscape is preserved as is, with its difficult-to-understand mix of historic layers and incomplete commemorative layers.	The cultural landscape is preserved as is. Visitors are helped to understand the mix of features through technological and other interpretive devices.	The cultural landscape is preserved in its existing state across most of the park. A few selected areas of high interpretive value are rehabilitated to encampment-era conditions.	The cultural landscape is preserved in its existing state across most of the park. A number of areas of high interpretive value are rehabilitated to encampment-era conditions.
	Historic views that characterized the encampment continue to be obscured by trees and forest.	Historic views continue to be obscured by trees and forest. Views are indicated to visitors through technological and other interpretive devices.	Historic views that are essential to understanding the strategic design of the encampment are re-established.	
	Encampment-era structures are stabilized. Restoration takes place whenever funds are available.	Encampment-era structures are preserved or restored primarily for interpretive or visitor services purposes. The preservation process itself is part of the interpretive program.	Encampment-era structures are restored or rehabilitated primarily for interpretive or visitor services purposes.	
	Post-encampment structures are stabilized on an opportunistic basis when funds are available.	Assessments of post-encampment structures for interpretive use, visitor services, administration, or historic leasing are underway as of this writing. Where feasible, historic structures are preserved or rehabilitated. Contemporary structures also are being evaluated for suitable and feasible uses. Criteria include:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential for use by partners with compatible and/or supportive missions;• Potential for use that allows structures to be preserved and sustained;• Potential for use for park operations if no other suitable space is available;• Potential for use for park housing in cases where it enhances security or fills a need; Structures that cannot feasibly be sustained and reused may be demolished.	
	All known archeological sites are stabilized and protected against destruction from vegetation and erosion. Inappropriate visitor use—particularly from illegal trails—continues to threaten some sites. Ongoing archeological research and excavations occur on an as-needed basis when funding is available.	All known archeological sites are stabilized and protected against destruction from vegetation, erosion and inappropriate visitor use. Archeological research in all eras of Valley Forge history is emphasized, and in some cases may lead to excavation. Public programs about the science and process of archeology, as well as observation and participation in digs, are a key feature of this alternative.	All known archeological sites are stabilized and protected against destruction from vegetation, erosion and inappropriate visitor use. Archeological research is not a focus of this alternative.	All known archeological sites are stabilized and protected against destruction from vegetation, erosion and inappropriate visitor use. Archeological research in encampment-era history is important, and in some cases may lead to excavation. The public is educated about the science and process of archeology through observation and participation in digs when they are occurring.
	Encampment-era earthworks and fortifications continue to be damaged by natural erosion, the effects of tree roots, and erosion or compaction by visitors.	All encampment-era earthworks and fortifications are stabilized and protected against destruction from vegetation and erosion and inappropriate visitor use.		
	The park, NCAR, and Benninghoff collections remain physically separate. Some of VFNHP’s collections continue to be stored in existing spaces that lack appropriate conditioning, access, and security.	The park, NCAR and Benninghoff collections and archives are combined, housed, and displayed entirely in the new NCAR	The park, NCAR, and Benninghoff collections are combined, housed, and displayed in the new NCAR, as well as in rehabilitated existing buildings around the park which meet contemporary archival and conservation standards.	

Concept 1 – No Action	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4
Biological resources are not managed or maintained for community composition.	Biological resources are managed to preserve and restore the natural abundances, diversities, dynamics and distributions of native plants and animal populations within forested and other naturally occurring communities (such as wooded wetlands).	Some areas of the park are managed primarily to achieve interpretive goals (e.g., restoration of encampment-era conditions), which may require actions such as cutting wooded areas. In areas with lesser interpretive value, biological resources are managed to preserve and restore the natural abundances, diversities, dynamics and distributions of native plants and animal populations within forested and other naturally occurring communities.	
Invasive species are documented in all communities within the park. Several species continue to be targeted for control. Funding and personnel limitations continue to hinder progress. The number and density of invasive species continue to increase each year.	In naturally occurring communities (such as forests) where species populations occur in unnaturally high or low concentrations as a result of human influences or extirpation of predators, and such occurrences cause unacceptable impacts on natural resources and natural processes, the biological and physical components of these systems are managed to accelerate natural recovery.	In naturally occurring communities where species populations occur in unnaturally high or low concentrations as a result of human influences or extirpation of predators, and such occurrences cause unacceptable impacts on natural resources and natural processes, the biological and physical components of these systems are managed to allow natural recovery.	
Although meadows are not a naturally occurring community within the park, they represent small-grain agriculture present at the time of the encampment. They are mowed to manage woody growth, but without more intensive management, the number and density of invasive species continue to increase each year.	Meadows are intensively managed to enhance their high habitat values as well as their interpretive values in representing 18th century agriculture.	Meadows are primarily managed to maintain their value in representing 18th century agriculture and secondarily to enhance their high habitat values.	
The park continues to participate in Valley Creek initiatives to protect the quality of water resources.	The park takes a lead in initiatives to protect and restore the quality of Valley Creek water resources. The park is an active participant in local and regional initiatives that protect and enhance the quality of Schuylkill River and water resources. The park augments the use of Best Management Practices (including low impact development techniques) to improve water quality and protect water resources inside park boundaries.	The park is an active partner in local and regional initiatives that protect and restore the quality of Schuylkill River and Valley Creek water resources. The park augments the use of Best Management Practices (including low impact development techniques) to improve water quality and protect water resources inside park boundaries.	The park continues to participate in Valley Creek initiatives to protect the quality of water resources. The park augments the use of Best Management Practices (including low impact development techniques) to improve water quality and protect water resources inside park boundaries.
To promote better air quality, the park continues to monitor atmospheric deposition and to minimize emissions from park operations.	In order to mitigate the harmful effects of air pollution on natural and cultural resources, scenic vistas, and the health of visitors, the park participates in promoting measures to protect and enhance air quality in the Philadelphia airshed.		

Existing state routes in the park (including Routes 23 and 252, and North Gulph and Yellow Springs Roads) remain as is. High volumes of commuter and other through-traffic continue on public roads in the park.	Through the Valley Forge Areas Transportation Planning Study, the park coordinates with PennDOT and local governments in determining the best means to attract through-traffic from Route 23 to Route 422. Please see a description of options P2-P5 on pages 4 & 5 of this newsletter.		
High volumes of traffic and excessive traveling speeds on Routes 252 and 23 continue to threaten park visitors, and limit use of the park.	Routes 252 and 23 remain public roads and receive traffic calming measures according to options P1 and P6.		Route 252 remains a public road and receives traffic calming measures according to option P6. Route 23 is acquired from the commonwealth and receives traffic calming. Trucks are banned.
The park acquires ownership of County Line Road from the commonwealth. Through-traffic continues.	The park acquires ownership of County Line Road from the commonwealth. Through-traffic continues.	The park acquires ownership of County Line Road from the commonwealth. Through-traffic is ended.	The park acquires ownership of County Line Road from the commonwealth and the road is removed.
Gulph Road is a public road used by through-traffic in the park.	Gulph Road is acquired from the commonwealth; through-traffic continues and is controlled with traffic-calming.	Gulph Road is acquired from the commonwealth; through- and visitor traffic ends.	Gulph Road is acquired from the commonwealth; through- and visitor traffic ends; the road is restored to a historic trace as part of the restoration of the Grand Parade.
There is minimal control of visitor access and circulation on park tour route. Private cars continue to be allowed on tour route on self-guided tours. No shuttle service or bus tour is available.	Private vehicular access and circulation on park tour route is largely unchanged. No shuttle or bus tour is available.	Private vehicular access and circulation on park tour route is ended. A shuttle frequently accesses the perimeter parking lots to carry visitors around the park, the tour route, and to the NCAR.	Private vehicular access and circulation on park tour route is ended. Two shuttle systems are in place: a basic shuttle that carries visitors around the park and a shuttle that provides an interpretive tour.
Parking lots remain in existing locations spread across the encampment area; no new lots are built. Some areas have parking lots that are rarely used; other areas are regularly overcrowded.	Some parking lots are relocated or removed from the encampment area.	Parking lots are removed from the encampment area and re-located to the visitor center and the perimeter of the park.	Almost all parking lots are removed, except for a primary parking lot at the visitor center and several lots located strategically for recreational access on the north side and west sides of the park. The possibility of off-site parking is pursued.
Access between the north and south sides is via the reconstructed Betzwood Bridge and Pawlings Road.	Access between the north and south sides is via the reconstructed Betzwood Bridge and Pawlings Road as well as a new bicycle and pedestrian bridge across the Schuylkill River.		Access between the north and south sides is via the reconstructed Betzwood Bridge and Pawlings Road.
Recreational users (about 80% of current visitors) continue to be welcomed although no new services or facilities are provided. Recreation continues to grow, impeding the historical experience and impairing cultural and natural resources.	Recreational users continue to be welcomed. New services and information about cultural and natural resources are provided to enhance their visits. Recreational opportunities are enhanced in places where they have little or no impact on cultural resources or historical interpretation.		Recreational users continue to be welcomed. New services and information about cultural and natural resources are provided to enhance their visits. Recreation is not allowed in interpretive zones.

Multi-use trail is retained as is, causing conflicts between recreational and interpretive use. Conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians due to high levels of use continue. The reconstructed Betzwood Bridge provides better linkage between the north and south sides of the park.	Multi-use trail is retained as is with modifications made where there is direct conflict with interpretative activity. Pedestrians and bicyclists continue to use it for access to historic venues. Conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians due to high levels of use continue. Better linkages are made to north side trails via reconstructed Betzwood Bridge, a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the Schuylkill River, and a pedestrian and bicycle tunnel under Route 422.	Multi-use trail is retained as is with modifications made where there is direct conflict with interpretative activity or areas that are rehabilitated to historic conditions. Pedestrians continue to use it for access to historic venues; bicyclists use the tour road, which is free of private automobiles. Better linkages are made to north side trails via reconstructed Betzwood Bridge, a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge across the Schuylkill River, and a pedestrian and bicycle tunnel under Route 422. A shuttle is available for access to all areas of the park.	Multi-use trail is retained as is with modifications made where there is direct conflict with interpretative activity or areas that are rehabilitated to historic conditions. Pedestrians continue to use it for access to historic venues; bicyclists use the tour road, which is free of private automobiles. Better linkages are made to north side trails via reconstructed Betzwood Bridge. A shuttle is available for access to all areas of the park.
No recreational facilities or services are added at the park's west end.	The west end of the park, between Valley Forge Farms and the Village of Valley Forge, is a recreational spine for bicycling, hiking and small-group picnicking. Appropriate parking, restrooms, and food service are provided.		No recreational facilities are added at the park's west end.
No recreational facilities or services are added at the park's north side.	On the north side, appropriate restrooms and food service are provided in connection with the existing Schuylkill River Trail. A large-group picnic area is established. Some new bicycle trails are developed.		On the north side, appropriate restrooms and food service are provided in connection with the existing Schuylkill River Trail.
New bicycle trail connections beyond the park are discouraged, in order to slow the growing use of park trails.	Connections to existing and future trails outside VFNHP are pursued to encourage visitors to arrive through non-motorized means.		

School and other educational programs continue but are constrained by lack of available space and staff. The educational mission is not fully achieved.	Educational programming is a core function of VFNHP/NCAR. The park is a living classroom; the museum provides facilities to accommodate learning. Education could include a range of opportunities, including guided tours, curriculum-based programs for schools, web- or cable-based distance learning, internships for older students, interactive CDs, teacher training and institutes, adult education, lecture series, symposia, and more. The feasibility of various approaches will be evaluated during this planning process and will be reported at a later date.		
Natural resource education regarding contemporary resource preservation issues continues to be sporadically available at the current Nature Center, constrained by lack of available space and staff.	Natural resource education on stewardship and contemporary resource preservation is essential. Active partnerships for contemporary resource preservation issues are sought with schools, institutions, and other partners who use the park's natural landscape and classroom facilities to provide programming.		
No historical research is programmed and no dedicated research space exists for scholars.	Research and scholarship is fundamental to a vibrant and provocative interpretive and educational program. The collections and archives are an important foundation and will be available to scholars. A range of possibilities for promoting and encouraging research, from partnerships with universities to establishing a new study institute, will be investigated.		